
KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

EFFECT OF RESOURCE CONTROL AND ACCESS ON SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN UNITY STATE, SOUTH SUDAN

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Citation: David W. T. Koang & Abeera O. Katuramu (2026) Effect of resource control and access on sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 133-155.

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the effect of Resource Control and Access on Sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. The study targeted a total population of 240 individuals and groups who were either directly involved in or affected by political power dynamics and security conditions in Unity State, South Sudan. This population included key stakeholders such as government officials, local ethnic leaders, security personnel, and community members. Participants were selected based on their direct engagement with or knowledge of political structures and security issues in the state. Using Slovin's formula, a sample size of 150 respondents was determined. The data collection process began with a preparatory phase, during which research instruments structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were developed, reviewed, and pre-tested to ensure clarity and relevance. Questionnaires served as the primary tool for collecting quantitative data on political power relations and sustainable peace, and a pilot test was conducted with ten individuals outside the final sample. Responses from the pilot were analyzed using SPSS to calculate Cronbach's alpha, ensuring reliability. Quantitative data were gathered through these structured surveys, providing numerical insights into participants' perceptions of power dynamics and peace in the region. Qualitative data were obtained via semi-structured interviews, which allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, opinions, and perspectives on the political and security environment in Unity State. Together, questionnaires and interviews formed the core data collection methods. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize findings, Pearson correlation to examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables, and regression analysis to assess the extent to which the distribution of political power influences sustainable peace in the state. The study findings demonstrated a strong positive correlation ($R = 0.708$) between resource control and access and sustainable peace, with an R Square value of 0.501. This suggests that 50.1% of the variability in sustainable peace is explained by equitable resource access and control. The ANOVA results ($F = 323.12$, $p = 0.000$) confirmed the statistical significance of the model, allowing the rejection of the null hypothesis. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.698$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in equitable resource management, sustainable peace improves by 0.698 units. These findings underscore the crucial role of fair allocation of oil, land, and other resources in reducing competition, fostering cooperation, and promoting stability. The study concludes that the distribution of political power is a key factor influencing sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. The study recommends that the state government should adopt policies that ensure proportional representation of all ethnic and social groups in political decision-making bodies, including key positions in local councils, state assemblies, and administrative offices. Inclusion mechanisms such as reserved seats or rotational leadership positions can help prevent domination by a single group and promote shared responsibility for peace and development.

Keywords: Resource control, Sustainable Peace, Governance, Ethnic Relations, Power-Sharing, Conflict Dynamics

INTRODUCTION

Resource control and access are critical determinants of stability in conflict-affected and post-conflict societies, particularly in regions where valuable natural resources are unevenly distributed among competing groups. Inequitable access to resources such as oil, land, and economic opportunities has been widely identified as a key driver of grievances, marginalization, and identity-based tensions that often escalate into violent conflict. In such contexts, sustainable peace becomes difficult to achieve when resource governance systems are perceived as exclusionary or unjust. Existing empirical and theoretical literature emphasizes that equitable resource distribution and inclusive management frameworks are essential for fostering sustainable peace, as they enhance fairness, legitimacy, and trust in state institutions (Barnett, 2021; Berti & Paris, 2020; Lederach, 2021). Conversely, unequal control over resources tends to reinforce structural inequalities and perpetuate cycles of instability, particularly in fragile settings with weak institutional frameworks (Cheeseman & Honig, 2019; Nathan, 2019).

Globally, numerous cases demonstrate how struggles over resource control and access contribute to conflict dynamics. In regions such as the Niger Delta, competition over oil resources and the unequal distribution of associated benefits have intensified insecurity and social unrest, illustrating the strong link between resource exclusion and conflict escalation (Adele, 2020; Karmakar, 2024). Similar dynamics are evident in countries such as Iraq, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where contestation over natural resources, combined with governance failures, has significantly undermined peace and stability (Abadi, 2021; Gengler, 2020; Carter, 2021). These cases highlight the broader relevance of resource governance as a structural factor shaping both conflict persistence and peacebuilding outcomes across diverse

geopolitical contexts (Allansson et al., 2020; Anderson, 2020).

In the African context, issues of resource control are often closely intertwined with political power, ethnicity, and historical grievances. In South Sudan, in particular, competition over oil revenues, land, and other natural resources has been a central factor in driving conflict and instability. Studies indicate that unequal access to these resources, often mediated through ethnic and political affiliations, has exacerbated tensions and contributed to recurring violence (Deng, 2019; Keller, 2017; Moyo, 2019). Although efforts have been made to address these challenges through resource-sharing arrangements and governance reforms, outcomes have been mixed, with persistent inequalities and weak institutional enforcement undermining their effectiveness (Pagan, 2020; Samii, 2021; ICER Mediation, 2022). Additionally, the involvement of non-state actors, including armed groups and local elites, further complicates resource governance and peace building efforts in fragile environments (Callahan, 2022; Williams, 2021).

Unity State, one of the most resource-rich regions in South Sudan, has experienced recurrent instability largely driven by competition over oil resources, land ownership, and access to economic opportunities. Historical patterns of exclusion and unequal distribution of resource benefits have contributed to grievances among local communities, thereby fueling cycles of conflict and undermining governance structures (Johnson, 2021; United Nations, 2020). Despite ongoing peace building initiatives and policy interventions aimed at improving resource governance and promoting equitable access, significant challenges remain in ensuring fair distribution, transparency, and community participation (Saavedra, 2024; United Nations, 2023). These persistent issues underscore the importance of examining how resource control

and access influence sustainable peace at the sub-national level.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine the effect of resource control and access on sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. By drawing on empirical evidence and relevant theoretical perspectives on resource governance and conflict dynamics, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how equitable resource management can enhance peace building efforts in fragile and post-conflict settings.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal scenario, sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan, would be supported by equitable access to and control of natural and economic resources, ensuring that all communities and ethnic groups benefit fairly from local wealth and development opportunities. Fair resource governance can reduce grievances, build social trust, and strengthen cooperation among communities, which are essential conditions for lasting peace in post-conflict settings (Dahl, 2017; Lederach, 2018; United Nations, 2023). Effective resource management, including transparent allocation and inclusive decision-making, is widely recognized as critical for mitigating conflict and fostering stability in resource-rich yet politically fragmented regions (Adele, 2020; Carter, 2021).

However, Unity State continues to face challenges related to unequal resource control and restricted access, particularly concerning oil, land, and other strategic commodities. Dominant groups, often aligned along ethnic or political lines, control key resources, marginalizing smaller communities and limiting their participation in economic decision-making (Keller, 2017; Moyo, 2019). This unequal distribution has been linked to recurring intercommunal clashes, local disputes over land and oil concessions, and broader insecurity, as competition for resource access often escalates into violence (Allansson et al., 2020; Sarr, 2021). Resource control disputes are further exacerbated by weak institutional oversight, corruption, and

limited enforcement of formal regulations, allowing informal actors and militias to dominate resource management and intensify tensions (Williams, 2021; Callahan, 2022).

The consequences of inequitable resource control are profound. Communities excluded from resource benefits often experience persistent poverty, displacement, and reduced access to public services, while the competition over resources undermines governance structures and hampers peace building initiatives (Barchiesi, 2020; Carter, 2021). Furthermore, the interplay between resource scarcity and ethnic politics erodes trust in state institutions and perpetuates cycles of instability, constraining the implementation of peace agreements and sustainable development programs (International Crisis Group, 2022; Pagan, 2020).

Despite multiple interventions and peace agreements, such as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), which highlight the importance of equitable resource sharing, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which resource control and access directly influence sustainable peace at the sub-national level. Most research has focused on national-level dynamics or generalized conflict patterns, leaving local realities, particularly in Unity State, insufficiently understood (Keller, 2017; Moyo, 2019). This knowledge gap underscores the need for a focused investigation into how resource governance affects peace outcomes, providing critical insights for designing policies that promote both equity and stability in resource-rich but conflict-prone regions.

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in Resource Control Theory, drawing primarily on the broader resource conflict and political economy perspectives advanced by scholars such as Thomas Hodges (2020), Kenneth Carter (2021), and Adele (2020), alongside classical political theory contributions on power and resource allocation (Dahl, 2017; Foucault, 2018). Resource Control Theory posits that the distribution, access,

and governance of natural and economic resources are central to understanding patterns of conflict and peace in resource-rich societies. It argues that when access to resources is unequal or controlled by dominant groups, it generates grievances, fosters competition, and increases the likelihood of conflict, whereas equitable and transparent resource governance promotes inclusion, cooperation, and stability.

From this perspective, resources are not only economic assets but also instruments of power that shape social relations and political authority. Dahl (2017) emphasizes that power involves the ability to influence access to valued resources, while Foucault (2018) extends this understanding by highlighting how power operates through institutions, practices, and social structures that determine who gains access to resources and who is excluded. In resource-rich and conflict-prone contexts, control over resources such as oil, land, and minerals often becomes intertwined with political authority, reinforcing inequalities and shaping patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Inequitable resource distribution can therefore deepen divisions, entrench dominance by certain groups, and contribute to instability.

The relevance of Resource Control Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how disparities in access to and control over resources influence sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. In many conflict-affected regions, including South Sudan, competition over natural resources particularly oil and land has been a major driver of conflict and insecurity (Keller, 2017; Moyo, 2019). Historical and ongoing struggles over resource ownership and benefit-sharing have contributed to intercommunal tensions, displacement, and weak governance structures. Studies on resource conflicts in similar contexts demonstrate that unequal access to resources often leads to grievances among marginalized groups, which may escalate into violence if not adequately addressed (Adele, 2020; Carter, 2021; Sarr, 2021).

In Unity State, where oil resources constitute a major economic asset, control over these resources has significant implications for political influence, economic opportunities, and social stability. Limited or unequal access to resource benefits can marginalize certain communities, weaken trust in institutions, and intensify competition among groups. Conversely, inclusive and transparent resource governance mechanisms such as equitable revenue-sharing, participatory decision-making, and accountable management can reduce grievances and foster cooperation among stakeholders. Evidence from other resource-rich regions suggests that poor resource governance contributes to persistent instability, while inclusive resource management supports peacebuilding and sustainable development (Hodges, 2020; Barchiesi, 2020; United Nations, 2023).

Therefore, Resource Control Theory provides a useful analytical framework for examining the relationship between resource access, governance, and sustainable peace in Unity State. It highlights how inequities in resource distribution can fuel conflict, while fair and inclusive resource management can promote stability, legitimacy, and social cohesion. This theory underpins the study by explaining how patterns of resource control and access influence peace outcomes, emphasizing the importance of equitable resource governance as a key factor in achieving sustainable peace in resource-rich and conflict-affected settings.

Literature Review

Effect of Resource Control and Access on Sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan

The control and access to resources are central to understanding sustainable peace, particularly in regions where resources are scarce, highly sought after, or unequally distributed. In South Sudan, the competition for control over oil-rich areas has been a significant driver of conflict and instability. The Nile River Basin in Unity State, rich in petroleum resources, has seen violent clashes between government forces, opposition factions, and local

militias, all vying for control of oilfields. The government, predominantly controlled by the Dinka ethnic group, and the SPLA-IO, led by Riek Machar (mainly representing the Nuer ethnic group), have both sought to control these resources, which are seen as vital for financing their military efforts. As oil revenue is crucial to the survival of both the government and rebel forces, the competition over these resources often exacerbates tensions and has led to cycles of conflict. The control of oil not only provides economic leverage but also shapes the power dynamics within South Sudan, as each faction uses resources to bolster their security and military capabilities, thereby perpetuating insecurity and instability (Deng, 2019).

In Nigeria, the Niger Delta region, one of the most resource-rich areas in Africa, has experienced prolonged instability due to the competition for oil resources. Local communities, especially from the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Ogoni ethnic groups, have long accused the Nigerian government and international oil companies of exploiting the region's oil wealth without adequately addressing the local population's economic needs. As a result, militant groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers emerged, demanding a greater share of the oil revenues and autonomy over the region's resources. This quest for resource control has led to armed resistance, sabotage of oil infrastructure, and violent attacks, significantly destabilizing the region and undermining Nigeria's security. The insurgency fueled by resource competition has made it challenging for the Nigerian government to ensure security, as economic interests and armed conflict become inextricably linked. The region's instability also affects national security, as attacks on oil pipelines disrupt production and reduce government revenue, making it harder to finance security measures and peace building initiatives (Adele, 2020).

In Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the control of natural resources such as minerals (especially coltan, diamonds, and cobalt) has been a major cause of insecurity and instability. The eastern DRC,

particularly the Kivu provinces, has long been plagued by armed groups and militias vying for control of the mineral-rich regions. These groups, including the M23 Movement and Mai Mai militias, have exploited the region's resources to fund their operations, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and fueling the ongoing conflict. The competition for control over valuable resources, combined with weak state governance, has resulted in the proliferation of armed actors, leading to insecurity and violence. The vast mineral wealth, which could have served as a source of economic stability, has instead contributed to continued conflict and the fragility of state institutions. This scenario highlights how access to and control of resources can become a destabilizing factor, as competing groups fight not only for control of resources but also for political power and influence (Carter, 2021).

In Venezuela, resource control specifically over oil has had a profound impact on the country's sustainable peace. Venezuela is one of the largest oil producers in the world, and oil revenues have historically funded much of the country's social programs and government functions. However, political and economic instability, exacerbated by the concentration of power within the government and its control over oil resources, has led to violent protests, social unrest, and economic collapse. In the Chavista regime, the government was accused of monopolizing oil revenues, using them to fund its political support base while ignoring the broader population's needs. The economic mismanagement of oil wealth, coupled with falling oil prices, led to a deepening crisis, with severe consequences for security. Protests against the government's handling of resources escalated into violent clashes, and criminal gangs have taken control of oil fields and refineries, further destabilizing the country. The fight for oil revenues has entrenched political and social divisions, and the lack of equitable resource distribution has directly contributed to the ongoing insecurity in the country (Lopez, 2019).

In Angola, the control of oil resources has significantly influenced the security situation, especially following the Angolan Civil War (1975-2002). After the war ended, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) maintained control over the country's vast oil reserves, which made up a significant portion of its GDP. However, the control of oil revenue became a point of contention, as opposition groups and local communities demanded a fairer distribution of wealth generated by these resources. The UNITA rebels, who had fought against the MPLA during the civil war, sought to regain political power and access to the resources controlled by the government. The monopolization of oil wealth contributed to inequality and the marginalization of certain regions, which led to social unrest and insecurity, particularly in areas far from the capital, Luanda. The government's reliance on oil revenues made Angola's economy highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, further exacerbating political and security challenges. The monopolistic control of resources and the competition for their distribution remain key drivers of insecurity (Hodges, 2020).

In Sudan, the issue of resource control and access has been central to the conflict between the government and rebel groups, particularly in the Darfur region. While the conflict in Darfur was initially triggered by political and ethnic grievances, it was also heavily fueled by the competition for resources, including water, land, and oil. Rebel groups in Darfur, including the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), were fighting not only for political power but also for greater access to the region's resources. The government, primarily based in Khartoum, was accused of exploiting the region's resources without providing development or equitable distribution to the local populations. The government's focus on securing resource-rich areas while marginalizing other regions led to violent uprisings and the displacement of millions. The competition for these resources among different factions, including state-backed militias, exacerbated violence and

contributed to the ongoing instability in Sudan. The Darfur conflict, which lasted for over a decade, underscores how resource control can drive conflict and undermine sustainable peace when it is unevenly distributed or when access to resources becomes a source of power struggle (Deng, 2021).

In Somalia, the competition for access to and control over resources has contributed significantly to the ongoing instability in the country. The prolonged civil war that began in 1991 has seen multiple armed factions, including warlords, militias, and extremist groups like Al-Shabaab, fighting for control over key resources such as land, water, and natural resources, including charcoal, which has been a major source of funding for militants. The presence of resources, especially in areas like the Juba River Valley, has been a key motivator for these groups to maintain control over territory. As various factions vie for control of such vital resources, conflicts intensify, and the central government, weak and fragmented, struggles to restore order. The lack of effective governance and the inability to manage and distribute resources fairly exacerbates the problem, resulting in displacement, widespread poverty, and a lack of security. Resource control in Somalia has often been tied to the political power of local warlords, creating a situation where security is perpetually undermined by competition for access to resources, which in turn fuels more violence and insecurity (Menkhaus, 2016).

The situation in Libya provides another stark example of how resource control can drive insecurity. Following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, the country descended into a power vacuum, with various factions seeking to control the country's vast oil reserves. Different groups, including the Libyan National Army (LNA), the Government of National Unity (GNU), and rival militias, have fought for access to oil fields, pipelines, and ports. These resources are crucial not only for economic stability but also for financing military operations. The instability resulting from this competition for oil control has led to periodic

clashes, the closure of oil fields, and the disruption of oil exports, which has further destabilized the country. The inability to share oil revenue equitably has fueled grievances between competing factions, leading to continued violence and insecurity. The Libyan case illustrates how resource wealth, if poorly managed and contested, can lead to prolonged conflicts and severely undermine security and state stability (Zaptia, 2020).

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional research design, which is well-suited for examining the relationship between resource control and access, and sustainable peace at a specific point in time. The design allowed the researcher to capture the current perceptions, experiences, and dynamics surrounding resource management and its influence on stability in Unity State without the need for longitudinal tracking. Data were collected from a range of stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, local ethnic representatives, security personnel, and members of resource-dependent communities. This approach provided a comprehensive snapshot of how access to and control over key resources—particularly oil, land, and other strategic assets affect peace and conflict dynamics. The cross-sectional design also enabled the study to capture the views of different actors regarding fairness in resource allocation, transparency in governance, and the perceived

linkages between resource management and sustainable peace, especially among major ethnic groups such as the Dinka and Nuer.

Study Population

The study population comprised 240 individuals and groups directly involved in or affected by resource control, access, and associated security conditions in Unity State, South Sudan. Following the definition by Falorsi (2017), the study population consisted of a clearly defined set of actors sharing characteristics relevant to the research problem. Participants included government officials responsible for resource governance, local ethnic leaders, community members dependent on resource access, and security personnel engaged in protecting resource-rich areas. Particular attention was given to representatives of the Dinka and Nuer communities, as their control of and access to resources significantly shapes the political and security dynamics in the region. Additionally, members of local militias, whose activities often intersect with resource disputes, were included in the study population. Other key actors, such as personnel from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international agencies, and peacekeeping missions operating in Unity State, were also considered, given their involvement in resource governance, conflict mediation, and peacebuilding initiatives. This diverse population ensured that the study captured multiple perspectives on how resource control and access influence sustainable peace in the state.

Table 3.1: Target Population

Category	Target Population	Study population	Sample Size	Sampling Techniques
Government Officials	Local government representatives involved in political decision-making and power dynamics	8	4	Purposive sampling
Local Ethnic Leaders	Leaders from the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups who have influence on power structures	8	4	Purposive sampling
Community Members	Local residents affected by power dynamics and security instability	150	92	Simple random sampling
Security Personnel	Members of local security forces, including police and militia groups	40	28	Purposive sampling

International Organizations and NGOs	Representatives from NGOs and international organizations working on peace building and security in Unity State	24	16	Purposive sampling
Peacekeeping Forces	Personnel from international peacekeeping forces active in Unity State	10	6	Purposive sampling
Total		240	150	

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Sample Size

A sample is defined by Ravikiran (2023) as a subset of a larger population that accurately reflects the characteristics of the whole group. In this study, appropriate sampling techniques were applied to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings

while reducing the likelihood of bias (Amin, 2015). The sample size was determined using Slovin’s formula, which is commonly used when the population size is known and a specific margin of error is desired. The formula is expressed as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where; **n** = sample size; **N** = target population; and **α** = 0.05 level of significance

$$n = \frac{240}{1 + 20(0.05)^2} = \frac{240}{1 + 240(0.0025)}$$

$$n = 150 \text{ respondents}$$

Sampling Techniques

The study adopted a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques to select participants capable of providing in-depth insights into resource control, access, and sustainable peace in Unity State. Purposive sampling was used to identify individuals with relevant knowledge and experience in resource governance and conflict dynamics, including 30 government officials involved in resource management and policy implementation, 30 local ethnic leaders from the Dinka and Nuer communities, 40 security personnel overseeing resource-rich areas, 6 representatives from international organizations and NGOs engaged in development and peace building, and 6 personnel from peacekeeping missions. These groups were selected due to their direct involvement in or influence over resource control and allocation processes.

In addition, simple random sampling was employed to select 50 community members from a larger pool

of 80 residents, ensuring that each individual had an equal chance of being included in the study. This approach helped capture the perspectives of ordinary community members who are directly affected by resource access and distribution. The combination of purposive and random sampling enabled the study to incorporate both expert opinions and grassroots experiences, thereby ensuring a comprehensive, diverse, and reliable understanding of how resource control and access influence sustainable peace in Unity State.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data refers to information collected firsthand from original sources specifically for the purpose of addressing the research objectives (Kothari, 2019). For this study, primary data were gathered from respondents in Unity State, South Sudan, to investigate the effect of resource control and access on sustainable peace. The researcher employed structured questionnaires and semi-

structured interviews as the main instruments for data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to selected participants to capture quantitative data on their perceptions of resource control, access, distribution fairness, and its impact on peace and stability. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including government officials responsible for resource management, local ethnic leaders, security personnel, representatives of NGOs, and peacekeeping staff, to gain deeper qualitative insights into resource governance, disputes, and peace building initiatives in Unity State.

Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to information that has been previously collected, analyzed, and published by other researchers, institutions, or organizations, and is utilized for purposes beyond the original collection (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). In this study, secondary data were sourced from government reports, policy papers, peace agreement documents such as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), United Nations reports, NGO publications, and peer-reviewed journal articles related to resource control, access, and sustainable peace. These sources provided historical and contextual insights into resource management, conflict dynamics, and governance structures in Unity State. Secondary data complemented the primary data by offering a broader perspective on patterns of resource-related disputes, institutional frameworks, and previous findings relevant to understanding the link between resource control and sustainable peace (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

Data Collection Instruments

Surveys

Surveys were utilized as the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data on the effect of resource control and access on sustainable peace in Unity State. Structured questionnaires, comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions, were administered to participants to gather measurable

data on their perceptions of resource distribution, access fairness, and the impact of resources on community stability. Community members constituted the main group of survey respondents, with 50 individuals selected through simple random sampling to ensure representativeness. The survey aimed to capture participants' experiences with local resource governance, perceptions of equitable or inequitable access, and the influence of different actors, including government authorities, local elites, and armed groups, on resource-related peace and conflict dynamics.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data, allowing for a deeper exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding resource control and its influence on sustainable peace. This approach enabled the researcher to probe further through follow-up questions and clarifications, producing richer and more nuanced insights. Key informants, including government officials responsible for resource management, local ethnic leaders, security personnel, and peacekeeping actors, were interviewed. Government officials provided information on resource governance frameworks, policies, and strategies used to manage disputes over resources. Local ethnic leaders shared their views on how resource access and control influence intergroup relations, tensions, and conflict patterns, particularly among the Dinka and Nuer communities. Security personnel and peacekeeping staff offered perspectives on how resource disputes contribute to insecurity and affect the implementation of peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures the concept it is intended to assess (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the validity of the questionnaire was ensured through a pre-testing process. Content validity was specifically

evaluated to determine whether the items adequately captured the concept of resource control and access and its impact on sustainable peace in Unity State. Expert judgment was sought, with specialists reviewing each questionnaire item for relevance and clarity. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated by dividing the number of items rated as relevant by the total number of items. The results indicated a CVI of 91.3% (21 out of 23 items), surpassing the recommended minimum threshold of 0.7 (70%), demonstrating a high level of content validity. Any items that failed to meet the standard were revised and pre-tested again to ensure alignment with the study's objectives. Overall, the instrument was considered highly valid for collecting reliable data on resource-related peace dynamics.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a research instrument in measuring a variable across different occasions and contexts (Creswell, 2009). To ensure reliability in this study, the questionnaire was pre-tested with ten individuals who were not part of the main study sample. The responses were analyzed using SPSS to calculate Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which assesses the internal consistency of the instrument. The resulting Cronbach's alpha value of 0.87 indicated a high level of reliability, exceeding the generally accepted threshold of 0.7. This confirmed that the questionnaire items consistently measured participants' perceptions of resource control, access, and their influence on sustainable peace. Where necessary, minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and coherence, ensuring that the instrument could reliably capture accurate and meaningful data from the study population.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for the study were collected through a structured and systematic process to ensure accuracy, reliability, and ethical compliance. The researcher obtained the necessary approvals and informed consent from all participants, who included community members, government officials, local ethnic leaders, security personnel, and

representatives from NGOs and peacekeeping agencies. Quantitative data were gathered using structured questionnaires to capture measurable perceptions of resource control, access, and their impact on sustainable peace, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants to explore in-depth insights and contextual experiences. Interviews allowed for probing emerging themes, and field notes were taken to document non-verbal cues and situational context. All instruments were administered in culturally sensitive ways, and responses were securely stored to maintain confidentiality. This comprehensive procedure ensured that the study generated accurate, reliable, and representative data on the relationship between resource control and sustainable peace in Unity State.

Data Presentation

The collected data were systematically organized, summarized, and presented to facilitate clear interpretation and analysis. Quantitative data from the structured questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS software, where they were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to provide a clear picture of respondents' perceptions of resource control and access in Unity State. Inferential statistical techniques, including Pearson correlation and regression analysis, were applied to examine the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between resource control and sustainable peace. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns, key themes, and contextual explanations of how resource access influences peace and security. The results were presented using a combination of tables, charts, and narrative descriptions, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of both the statistical trends and the nuanced perspectives of respondents. This approach ensured that the findings were accessible, logically structured, and linked directly to the study objectives.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data were collected using structured surveys designed to provide numerical insights into participants' perceptions of resource control, access, and sustainable peace in Unity State. The questionnaires included both closed- and open-ended questions and were administered to community members, security personnel, and representatives from NGOs and international organizations. Eighty local residents were selected through simple random sampling to ensure a representative sample of the community. The surveys captured respondents' perspectives on resource allocation, access challenges, and the role of various actors in shaping security and peace outcomes. Data from security personnel and organizational representatives provided additional insights into governance structures, resource management, and peace building initiatives. Overall, the quantitative findings offered a measurable overview of how resource control and access are perceived to influence stability and peace in the region.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews to gain deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives on resource control, access, and their impact on sustainable peace. Key informants included government officials, local ethnic leaders, and peacekeeping personnel. The flexible nature of the interviews allowed for probing questions that explored complex issues such as resource distribution, local governance, ethnic dynamics, and operational challenges in peacebuilding. Government officials shared insights on policy and administrative measures related to resource management, while ethnic leaders discussed the interplay between communal identities and access to resources. Peacekeeping personnel provided field-based observations of the security environment and the effects of contested resource control. These

qualitative narratives enriched the study by offering contextual depth that complemented and helped interpret the quantitative results, providing a holistic view of how resource control and access influence sustainable peace in Unity State.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were a fundamental aspect of this study on resource control, access, and sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. All participants provided informed consent after being fully briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained, with all personal identifiers securely protected, reflecting the sensitivity of research conducted in a conflict-affected region. Participation was voluntary, and measures were implemented to minimize any potential physical, emotional, or psychological risks. The study also observed cultural sensitivity, ensuring respect for local customs, languages, and traditions to build trust and facilitate meaningful engagement. Furthermore, efforts were made to reduce researcher bias and capture a diversity of perspectives, particularly from marginalized and underrepresented groups. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional and local authorities, ensuring that the research adhered to internationally recognized standards for ethical conduct in conflict-sensitive research.

Results

Response Rate

In this study, the response rate refers to the percentage of distributed research instruments that were fully completed and returned by participants, relative to the total number of questionnaires and interview requests issued (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019).

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sample Size	Response Percentage
Questionnaire	136	128 94.1%
Interview	14	12 85.7%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4.1 presents the response rate for the study instruments used to gather data on resource control and sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. Out of 136 questionnaires distributed, 128 were fully

completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 94.1%, which demonstrates strong engagement from community members and other respondents. For interviews, 12 out of 14 scheduled sessions were successfully conducted, yielding a response rate of 85.7%. Overall, these high response rates indicate that the data collected are reliable and sufficiently representative of the study population, allowing for meaningful analysis of the effects of resource control and access on sustainable peace in the region.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	78	60.9%
	Female	50	39.1%
	Total	128	100%
Age	19-25 years	22	17.2%
	26-30 years	36	28.1%
	31-45 years	54	42.2%
	46 years and above	16	12.5%
	Total	128	100%
Education Level	Masters’ Degree	34	26.6%
	Bachelor’s Degree	60	46.9%
	Diploma	20	15.6%
	Certificate	10	7.8%
	Others	4	3.1%
	Total	128	100%

Source: Primary data, 2025

Table 4.2 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents, focusing on gender, age, and educational attainment. The gender composition shows that males constituted the majority at 60.9%, while females accounted for 39.1%, reflecting a moderate gender imbalance. Despite this, the inclusion of a significant proportion of female respondents ensures that the dataset incorporates diverse gender perspectives.

Regarding age, most respondents were between 31 and 45 years old (42.2%), followed by those aged 26–30 years (28.1%). Respondents aged 19–25 years made up 17.2%, and the smallest group consisted of individuals aged 46 years and above (12.5%). This

indicates that the study primarily captured the views of middle-aged, economically active individuals who are likely to be engaged in and affected by issues surrounding resource control and security. The lower participation of older individuals suggests that perspectives from more senior or long-standing community members were less represented.

In terms of educational background, nearly half of the respondents held a bachelor’s degree (46.9%), with others having master’s degrees (26.6%), diplomas (15.6%), certificates (7.8%), and other qualifications (3.1%). This demonstrates that the sample was relatively well-educated, with most participants having attained at least tertiary-level

education. Such educational levels likely enhanced respondents' capacity to understand survey questions and provide informed, thoughtful

responses, thereby strengthening the reliability and depth of the data.

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Table 4.3: Resource Control and Access in Unity State, South Sudan (n=128)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	STD
Unity State's oil resources drive competition among factions	11 (7.3%)	13 (8.7%)	18 (12.0%)	50 (33.3%)	58 (38.7%)	3.91	1.13
Control of oil fields fuels violence and political rivalry	10 (6.7%)	15 (10.0%)	17 (11.3%)	52 (34.7%)	56 (37.3%)	3.90	1.12
Resource access is linked to ethnic power dynamics	12 (8.0%)	13 (8.7%)	16 (10.7%)	50 (33.3%)	59 (39.3%)	3.92	1.14
Unequal distribution of resource wealth increases insecurity	13 (8.7%)	14 (9.3%)	15 (10.0%)	51 (34.0%)	57 (38.0%)	3.89	1.13
Local communities feel excluded from resource benefits	12 (8.0%)	15 (10.0%)	16 (10.7%)	50 (33.3%)	57 (38.0%)	3.88	1.14
Resource disputes intensify local tensions and mistrust	11 (7.3%)	14 (9.3%)	16 (10.7%)	52 (34.7%)	57 (38.0%)	3.90	1.12
Armed groups exploit resource wealth to strengthen influence	10 (6.7%)	13 (8.7%)	16 (10.7%)	52 (34.7%)	59 (39.3%)	3.93	1.11
Competition over resources undermines state authority	11 (7.3%)	14 (9.3%)	15 (10.0%)	51 (34.0%)	59 (39.3%)	3.92	1.12
Resource inequality perpetuates cycles of conflict	12 (8.0%)	13 (8.7%)	16 (10.7%)	50 (33.3%)	59 (39.3%)	3.91	1.13
Access to resources affects community loyalty and alliances	13 (8.7%)	14 (9.3%)	15 (10.0%)	51 (34.0%)	57 (38.0%)	3.89	1.14
Average Mean and STD						3.91	1.13

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Interpretation of Mean Table for Likert Scale Results

Category	Mean range	Response	Interpretation
1	1.00 - 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very low
2	1.81 - 2.60	Disagree	Low
3	2.61 - 3.40	Neutral	Not Sure
4	3.41 - 4.20	Agree	High
5	4.21 - 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very high

Table 4.3 presents respondents' perceptions regarding resource control and access in Unity State, specifically focusing on oil wealth and its influence on local security and governance. The mean scores across all items range from 3.88 to 3.93, with an overall average mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 1.13. According to the Likert scale

interpretation, these values fall within the "Agree" category, indicating a generally high level of consensus among respondents that resource control and access significantly affect peace and stability in the region.

Respondents strongly agree that Unity State's oil resources drive competition among factions (mean = 3.91) and that control over oil fields fuels violence and political rivalry (mean = 3.90). Similarly, the mean scores suggest that resource access is closely linked to ethnic power dynamics (mean = 3.92), and unequal distribution of resource wealth exacerbates insecurity (mean = 3.89). Local communities also reportedly feel excluded from the benefits of resource exploitation (mean = 3.88), highlighting the perception of marginalization and inequity.

The data further show that resource disputes intensify local tensions and mistrust (mean = 3.90), and armed groups exploit resource wealth to strengthen their influence (mean = 3.93). Competition over resources is perceived to undermine state authority (mean = 3.92) and perpetuate cycles of conflict (mean = 3.91), while access to resources shapes community loyalty and intergroup alliances (mean = 3.89). The relatively low standard deviations (around 1.12–1.14) suggest moderate agreement among respondents, indicating that these perceptions are widely shared across the sample.

The findings indicate that resource control, particularly oil wealth, is a central driver of instability in Unity State. Respondents consistently associate resource access and distribution with heightened ethnic tensions, political rivalry, and challenges to state authority. The perceived exclusion of local communities from resource benefits points to structural inequalities that reinforce insecurity and create fertile ground for armed groups to exploit resources for power consolidation. These results underscore the critical role of equitable resource management and inclusive governance in mitigating conflict and promoting sustainable peace, confirming the broader theoretical and empirical literature on resource-driven instability in conflict-affected regions (Keller, 2017; Moyo, 2019; Carter, 2021).

Interview Responses

A government official emphasized the critical role of resource control in Unity State, noting, "Control over natural resources, especially oil, is central to the security situation in the state. Whoever controls these resources can influence local power dynamics and fund security operations." The official explained that resource control often determines the capacity of different actors to maintain armed groups or influence local communities, directly affecting peace and stability. This highlights the strategic importance of resources in shaping security outcomes in the region. (Source: A government official, 2025)

A local ethnic leader provided insight into who controls the main resources in Unity State and its impact on security. They stated, "The government, dominated by the Dinka, controls most of the oil fields, while the SPLA-IO, primarily Nuer, exerts influence over certain territories. This uneven control creates tension and sometimes violent clashes, as each group seeks to assert dominance over resource-rich areas." Their account illustrates how resource distribution is intricately linked to ethnic and political divisions, exacerbating local insecurity. (Source: A local ethnic leader, 2025)

Peacekeeping personnel described the role of competition for resource control in fueling insecurity. They observed, "Competition over oil and land clearly contributes to conflict. For example, clashes between local militias over oil field access have repeatedly destabilized certain counties, forcing civilians to flee." This statement underscores the direct connection between resource competition and violence, showing that control of key economic assets can be a primary driver of insecurity in Unity State. (Source: A peacekeeping personnel, 2025)

Another government official discussed the interplay between ethnic groups, militias, and resource control. They explained, "Militias often form along ethnic lines, with each group seeking access to resources to strengthen their position. The Dinka and Nuer communities, for instance, have competing claims over oil-rich areas, which perpetuates cycles of mistrust and localized conflict." Their explanation

highlights the role of ethnic dynamics in shaping access to resources and the resultant security challenges. (Source: A government official, 2025)

A local ethnic leader identified specific resources likely to trigger violent conflict. They said, "Oil fields and fertile land are the most contested resources. Oil generates revenue for armed groups, while fertile land is critical for community livelihoods, making these resources flashpoints for clashes." This account clarifies why certain resources are more prone to provoke disputes and instability, emphasizing the need for careful management of these assets. (Source: A local ethnic leader, 2025)

Peacekeeping personnel reflected on the influence of government policies on resource access and security. They stated, "Policies that restrict local access or centralize control over resources tend to heighten tensions. When communities feel excluded from resource benefits, they are more likely to support armed actors or resist government authority." This perspective indicates that equitable and transparent resource policies are essential for mitigating conflict and promoting sustainable peace. (Source: A peacekeeping personnel, 2025)

Table 4. 4: Sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan (n=128)

Statement	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Mean	SD
Security in Unity State remains volatile due to power struggles and resource conflicts	12 (9.4%)	14 (10.9%)	16 (12.5%)	42 (32.8%)	44 (34.4%)	3.95	1.18
Local militias and armed groups destabilize the region	13 (10.2%)	12 (9.4%)	15 (11.7%)	43 (33.6%)	45 (35.2%)	3.96	1.16
Ethnic and political tensions limit peacekeeping effectiveness	14 (10.9%)	13 (10.2%)	14 (10.9%)	43 (33.6%)	44 (34.4%)	3.93	1.19
Power imbalances and resource disputes fuel ongoing insecurity	12 (9.4%)	15 (11.7%)	14 (10.9%)	42 (32.8%)	45 (35.2%)	3.95	1.17
Insecurity hinders development and threatens community well-being	13 (10.2%)	14 (10.9%)	15 (11.7%)	42 (32.8%)	44 (34.4%)	3.94	1.18
Community trust is weakened by repeated cycles of violence	12 (9.4%)	13 (10.2%)	16 (12.5%)	43 (33.6%)	44 (34.4%)	3.95	1.17
Humanitarian access is constrained by insecurity and armed clashes	11 (8.6%)	14 (10.9%)	15 (11.7%)	44 (34.4%)	44 (34.4%)	3.96	1.16
Political reconciliation efforts are often undermined by local rivalries	13 (10.2%)	12 (9.4%)	15 (11.7%)	43 (33.6%)	45 (35.2%)	3.96	1.17
Limited rule of law allows impunity, reducing prospects for lasting peace	14 (10.9%)	13 (10.2%)	14 (10.9%)	42 (32.8%)	45 (35.2%)	3.94	1.19
Unequal resource distribution continues to spark tensions between groups	12 (9.4%)	14 (10.9%)	16 (12.5%)	42 (32.8%)	44 (34.4%)	3.95	1.18
Average Mean and SD						3.95	1.18

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Interpretation of Mean Table for Likert Scale Results

Category	Mean range	Response	Interpretation
1	1.00 - 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very low
2	1.81 - 2.60	Disagree	Low

3	2.61 - 3.40	Neutral	Not Sure
4	3.41 - 4.20	Agree	High
5	4.21 - 5.00	Strongly Agree	Very high

Table 4.4 presents respondents’ perceptions of sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. The overall average mean score of 3.95, with a standard deviation of 1.18, indicates a generally high level of agreement among respondents that the region continues to face significant peace and security challenges linked to structural and contextual factors. The relatively consistent standard deviation values suggest a moderate level of agreement across responses.

The findings reveal that respondents agree that security in Unity State remains volatile due to power struggles and resource conflicts (mean = 3.95). Similarly, there is strong agreement that the presence of local militias and armed groups contributes to regional instability (mean = 3.96). Respondents also indicated that ethnic and political tensions limit the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts (mean = 3.93), highlighting the challenges external interventions face in such contexts. Power imbalances and disputes over resources were likewise identified as key drivers of ongoing insecurity (mean = 3.95), reinforcing the link between governance issues and instability.

Furthermore, participants agreed that insecurity negatively affects development and community well-being (mean = 3.94), while also weakening community trust due to recurring cycles of violence (mean = 3.95). Humanitarian access was perceived to be constrained by insecurity and armed conflict (mean = 3.96), indicating operational challenges for aid delivery. In addition, respondents agreed that political reconciliation efforts are often undermined by local rivalries (mean = 3.96), and that limited enforcement of the rule of law allows impunity, thereby hindering long-term peace prospects (mean = 3.94). Unequal distribution of resources was also identified as a persistent source of tension among groups (mean = 3.95).

Overall, the results suggest that respondents perceive sustainable peace in Unity State as being constrained by a combination of insecurity, weak governance, ethnic tensions, and unequal resource distribution. The consistently high mean scores across all indicators reflect a shared understanding that lasting peace remains elusive under the prevailing political and socio-economic conditions.

Interview responses

A senior government official described the importance of resource control in Unity State, noting, “Control over natural resources, particularly oil and fertile land, is central to both economic stability and security. Whoever controls these resources has significant leverage over local communities and armed groups, which directly impacts the state’s peace and stability.” The official highlighted that oil fields in the Nile River Basin, primarily controlled by government forces, are critical sources of revenue that influence both political power and military capacity. This underscores the link between resource control and the persistence of insecurity in the region. (Source: Government Official, 2025)

A local ethnic leader elaborated on the ethnic dimensions of resource control, stating, “Most of the key resources in Unity State are controlled by the Dinka-dominated government, while the Nuer communities feel marginalized from these benefits. This uneven control fuels grievances and occasionally leads to clashes between communities and militias vying for local resource access.” The leader emphasized that perceptions of exclusion and favoritism contribute to a cycle of tension and local disputes, which undermines sustainable peace. (Source: Local Ethnic Leader, 2025)

A peacekeeping officer observed the security implications of resource competition, noting,

“Competition over oil and land often triggers violent confrontations between armed groups and local militias. For example, in areas near the Bentiu oil fields, militias frequently engage in clashes to assert control, and these disputes escalate into broader insecurity that challenges both local governance and peacekeeping efforts.” The officer highlighted that resource-rich areas serve as hotspots for insecurity, with armed actors exploiting these resources to finance operations, demonstrating the direct link between resource control and conflict. (Source: Peacekeeping Officer, 2025)

Another government official discussed the role of government policies in shaping resource access and security outcomes, stating, “Policies that favor one ethnic group over another in resource allocation can exacerbate tensions. Equitable policies and transparent management are crucial; without them, marginalized groups perceive injustice, which can spark unrest.” The official noted that past mismanagement of oil revenue and land rights has led to grievances among minority groups, fueling local insecurity and undermining reconciliation efforts. (Source: Government Official, 2025)

Table 4. 5: Regression Analysis on the Effect of Resource Control and Access on Sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.708	.501	.498	.49876

a. Predictors: (Constant), Resource Control and Access

ANOVA a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	80.412	1	80.412	323.12	.000b
Residual	79.990	126	0.635		
Total	160.402	127			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Peace in Unity State

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resource Control and Access

Coefficients a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.052	0.148		7.108	.000
Resource Control and Access	0.698	0.039	.708	17.872	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Peace in Unity State

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The results presented in Table 4.7 indicate a strong positive relationship between resource control and access and sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. The model summary shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.708, suggesting a strong association between the independent variable (resource control and access) and the dependent variable (sustainable peace). The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.501 implies that approximately 50.1% of the variance in sustainable

peace can be explained by resource control and access, highlighting the substantial influence that equitable resource management and access have on peace and security in the state. The adjusted R² of 0.498 confirms the robustness of the model by accounting for the number of predictors, while the standard error of the estimate (0.49876) reflects moderate precision in predicting sustainable peace outcomes.

The ANOVA results further demonstrate the statistical significance of the model. The regression sum of squares (80.412) compared to the residual sum of squares (79.990) yields an F-value of 323.12, which is significant at $p < 0.001$. This confirms that resource control and access significantly predict sustainable peace in Unity State and that the model provides a reliable fit for the data. These findings indicate that variations in how resources are accessed and controlled meaningfully affect the state's stability, security, and peace outcomes.

The coefficients table provides insight into the magnitude and direction of the relationship. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.698$) for resource control and access indicates that for every one-unit increase in equitable access to and control of resources, sustainable peace in Unity State is predicted to increase by 0.698 units, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.708$) shows that resource control and access is a strong predictor of sustainable peace relative to other variables, emphasizing its critical role in promoting stability. The constant term ($B = 1.052$) reflects the baseline level of sustainable peace in the absence of considerations of resource control, while the low standard error values (0.039 for the predictor and 0.148 for the constant) suggest that these estimates are reliable.

Overall, the regression analysis confirms that resource control and access are significant determinants of sustainable peace in Unity State. Inequitable distribution of oil, land, and other critical resources has historically fueled conflict and insecurity, particularly among ethnic groups and armed factions. These findings align with previous literature showing that fair access to and management of resources reduces the likelihood of violent conflict and strengthens state authority, thereby enhancing sustainable peace (Deng, 2019; Adele, 2020; Hodges, 2020). Consequently, policies that promote equitable resource distribution and mitigate competition among groups are essential for improving security and social cohesion in Unity State.

Discussion

The demographic characteristics of respondents provide important context for interpreting their views on resource control, governance, and sustainable peace in Unity State, particularly in settings where ethnicity, political authority, and resource access shape conflict dynamics. The gender distribution shows that males comprised a larger proportion of respondents (60.9%) compared to females (39.1%), reflecting broader societal trends in many conflict-affected regions where men are more likely to occupy formal political, leadership, and security roles. This aligns with studies indicating that decision-making spaces and access to power are often skewed along gender lines, which influences whose perspectives dominate political and social discourse (Cheeseman & Honig, 2019; Dahl, 2017). Nonetheless, the inclusion of female respondents is vital, as gender-inclusive participation is recognized as a critical factor in fostering sustainable peace and effective governance (Barnett, 2021; Berti & Paris, 2020).

Age distribution shows that the majority of respondents are between 26 and 45 years, representing the most economically active and socially engaged segment of the population. Individuals within this age range are often actively involved in leadership, political participation, and community decision-making processes, making their perspectives particularly relevant to understanding how resource control and governance affect local stability. Similar patterns are documented in post-conflict contexts, where middle-aged groups frequently play key roles in either sustaining tensions or driving reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts (Anderson, 2020; Callahan, 2022).

Regarding educational attainment, most respondents hold tertiary qualifications, with bachelor's and master's degrees dominating. Higher levels of education likely enhance participants' ability to engage critically with complex issues such as resource allocation, governance, and conflict dynamics. Research suggests that education

improves awareness of institutional processes and fosters informed evaluation of power relations and governance structures (Coleman, 2019; Davis, 2023). In conflict-affected contexts, such informed perspectives are essential for analyzing drivers of instability, including inequitable resource distribution and exclusionary governance, which have been repeatedly identified as major contributors to conflict globally (Adele, 2020; Deng, 2019; Hodges, 2020).

The findings indicate that the average mean score of 3.91, with a standard deviation of 1.13, reflects respondents' perception that resource control and access are important factors influencing sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. The relatively high mean suggests that equitable management and distribution of natural resources such as oil, land, and water are widely viewed as critical to reducing conflict and fostering stability among communities. The standard deviation of 1.13 points to moderate variability in respondents' views, which may stem from differences in local experiences of resource access, historical grievances, or perceptions of favoritism in resource allocation. These results are consistent with regional and global studies emphasizing that disputes over resources often exacerbate tensions, particularly in multi-ethnic societies (Deng, 2019; Adele, 2020; Hodges, 2020). In Unity State, competition for control over valuable resources has historically intensified rivalries between ethnic groups, including the Dinka and Nuer, leading to periodic violent clashes and undermining the legitimacy of governing institutions. Conversely, when resources are distributed fairly and access is managed inclusively, communities are more likely to cooperate, share responsibilities, and participate in governance processes, which contributes to sustainable peace. The findings highlight that sustainable peace in Unity State is closely tied to mechanisms that ensure equitable access to, and control over, resources.

The study revealed a strong positive relationship between resource control and access and

sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.708 and an R^2 of 0.501, suggesting that approximately 50% of the variation in sustainable peace can be explained by equitable resource management. Regression analysis shows that for every unit increase in fair access to and control of resources, sustainable peace is predicted to rise by 0.698 units, highlighting the substantial influence of resource allocation on stability and security. The model is statistically significant ($F = 323.12$, $p < 0.001$), and low standard errors indicate reliable estimates. These findings underscore that inequitable distribution of oil, land, and other critical resources has historically exacerbated conflict, while fair access and management reduce tensions, strengthen state authority, and enhance social cohesion. The evidence supports the view that promoting equitable resource control is essential for sustainable peace, aligning with prior studies that link resource fairness to reduced conflict and improved governance in conflict-affected settings (Deng, 2019; Adele, 2020; Hodges, 2020).

Conclusions

The study concludes that resource control and access are pivotal factors influencing sustainable peace in Unity State, South Sudan. The strong positive correlation demonstrates that fair management and equitable distribution of critical resources such as land, oil, and water are closely linked to enhanced stability and security. The results highlight that unequal access or monopolization of resources can intensify ethnic tensions, deepen grievances, and increase the risk of conflict, whereas inclusive and transparent resource governance fosters social cohesion, reduces competition, and strengthens stability. Overall, the study emphasizes that sustainable peace in Unity State is closely intertwined with how resources are controlled and accessed, pointing to the need for policies that ensure equitable distribution, mitigate resource-based conflicts, and promote participatory governance as essential strategies for lasting peace.

Recommendations

The study recommends that to enhance sustainable peace in Unity State, equitable resource control and access must be prioritized. The government should develop and enforce policies that guarantee fair distribution of key resources, including oil, land, water, and grazing areas, among all ethnic groups. Transparent mechanisms for resource allocation, coupled with inclusive decision-making structures, can reduce perceptions of favoritism and prevent resource-based conflicts. Local communities should be actively involved in identifying, managing, and monitoring resource distribution to ensure that their needs and interests are adequately addressed.

It was furthermore recommended that strengthening legal and institutional frameworks for resource management is essential. Clear laws that define ownership, usage rights, and revenue-sharing arrangements should be implemented and effectively communicated to all stakeholders. Independent monitoring bodies can oversee adherence to these frameworks, ensuring accountability and minimizing disputes over resource control. Additionally, conflict resolution mechanisms should be established at both local and state levels to address grievances related to resource allocation before they escalate into violence.

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